United Nations DP/FPA/2014/3

Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Office for Project Services

Distr.: General
15 January 2014

Original: English

First regular session 2014
27 to 31 January 2014, New York
Item 7 of the provisional agenda
UNFPA -Country programmes and related matters

United Nations Population Fund

Modification to procedures for consideration and approval of UNFPA country programme documentation

Summary

The present document contains a proposal for a one-time review and approval of the UNFPA country programme documentat the same Executive Board session. This proposed modification of procedures is in line with proposals brought forth by UNDP, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Food Programme (WFP). It responds to the outcomeof the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system (A/RES/67/226) in 2012, which requests the United Nations development system to further simplify and harmonize agency-specific programming instruments and processes in alignment with the United Nations Development Assistance Framework.

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Elements of a decision

The Executive Board may wish to: (a) endorse the proposed modification to the procedures for consideration and approval of UNFPA country programme documentation (DP/FPA/2014/3); (b) welcome the continued efforts made by the members of the United Nations Development Group towards further harmonization and streamlining of programming instruments and processes in support of country programmes of cooperation, in line with the recommendation of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system; (c) stress that the programming process for UNFPA cooperation should continue to emphasize national ownership; and (d) request that the UNFPA country programme documents continue to be developed on the basis of national plans and priorities, within the framework of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, where applicable, and of the UNFPA strategic plan.

I. Background

1. In 2001, the Executive Board approved new procedures for consideration and approval of country programme documents in its decision 2001/11. In subsequent decision 2006/36, the Executive Board approved changes to procedures. The decisions affirmed, among other principles, those of national ownership, United Nations system-wide coherence, simplification and harmonization with other United Nations organizations, and Executive Board involvement in the review and approval process.

2. The proposed modification of procedures responds to the call made in the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations systemto simplify and harmonize programming instruments and processes across the United Nations funds and programmes.

II. Modification of procedures for consideration and approval of UNFPA country programme documentation

3. The proposed modified procedures seekto improve and simplify the process for consideration and approval of country programme documents.

4. At present, in accordance with the Executive Board decisions noted above, draft documents containing indicative budgets are presented for consideration and review by the Executive Board at its annual session (which according to recent practice takes place in June). Within six weeks of the close of the Executive Board discussion, the documents are revised to incorporate any changes proposed for the programme by members of the Executive Board, as well as government and other partners, and are posted to the UNFPA Executive Board website. Within six weeks, unless written requests are submitted by at least five Members of the Executive Board to review the country programme

documents at the second regular session (which according to recent practice takes place in September), the documents are then approved on a no-objection basis at that session. Final versions of the approved documents, incorporating the changes made to the revised country programme documents, are then posted to the UNFPA Executive Board website.

5. The modified approach invites the Executive Board to both consider and approve the country programme document, on a no-objection basis, in one session. In keeping with the principle of nationallyled development, UNFPA proposes that country programme documents bepresented at the Executive Board session that is most appropriate in terms of Government and country-level planning and priorities. By combining the current three-step documentation process (draft, revised, and final country programme document) into a one-step process, the proposal offers the potential for substantial savings in time and transaction costs for the relevant governments, Executive Board members and UNFPA country, regional and headquarters offices. UNFPA will continue to consult with partner governments at the country level during the preparation of the country programme document in order to facilitate review when it is formally submitted for Executive Board consideration.

6. The proposal takes into account the fact that both review and approval of the country programme documents by the Executive Board, and follow-up on the recommendations made by the members of the Board, are vital to the country programme process. The drafts would be made availableto members of the Executive Board electronically onthe UNFPA Executive Board website approximately 12 weeks before the session at which approval is anticipated.

7. Following current practice, comments on the country programme documents would be shared with UNFPA in advance of the Executive Board discussion through informal channels, including discussions at the country level, as well asformally at the relevant session of the Executive Board. Delegations would be encouraged to share comments in formal statements if they deem this

appropriate. Following recent practice, written statements would beposted to the PaperSmart portal during each session and madeavailable thereafter as electronic archives. All comments and recommendations made by members of the Executive Board would be discussed by the concerned Government and the UNFPA country office and incorporated, as appropriate and agreed upon, into the documents operationalizing the United Nations Development Assistance Frameworkor its equivalents. They will be also agreed by the relevant government and UNFPA office, and will be consistent with the approved country programme documents.

8. In addition to the country programme document, members of the Executive Board have access to the UNFPAstrategic plan and the integrated results and resources framework, as well as a wide range of planning and performance information available online. This information already includes United Nations Development Action Frameworks, the annual report of the Executive Director, and country programme performance summaries, evaluations and budgeted evaluation plans.They complement the emphasis on more systematic, continuous and evidence-based results-based management.These efforts are aided by ongoing improvements to technological innovation that support tracking and reporting results and performance, including in real time.

III. Elements of a decision

9. **The Executive Board may wish to:**

(a) ***Endorse*** **the proposedmodification to procedures for consideration and approval of UNFPA country programme documentation (DP/FPA/2014/3);**

(b) ***Welcome*** **the continued efforts made by the members of the United Nations Development Group towards further harmonization and streamlining of programming instruments and processes in support of country programmes of cooperation, in line with the recommendation of the**

quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system;

(c) *Stress* that the programming process for UNFPA cooperation should continue to emphasize national ownership;

(d) *Request* that the UNFPA country programme documents continue to be developed on the basis of national plans and priorities, within the structureof the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, where applicable, and of the UNFPA strategic plan.